

**IMPROVEMENTS IN DATA STORAGE****ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

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A data reader is arranged to read data from a data-holding medium, said data being arranged into a plurality of data items each containing user data and non-user data, with said non-user data including one or more synchronisation fields. The data reader has a read head for reading a channel of said data-holding medium to generate a data signal comprising said data items, and processing circuitry arranged to receive and process said data signals to detect synchronisation fields, including qualifying the detection of the synchronisation fields to tolerate one or more errors in those synchronisation fields. This means that the synchronisation fields can be detected more reliably, so that more of the user data is recovered.

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